

MAKE YOUR
GIFT COUNTERPUNCH
DIAL 800-840-3683

Tells the Facts and Names the Names

CounterPunch

\$2.50

DECEMBER 1-15, 1999

Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair

VOL. 6, NO. 21

■ IN THIS ISSUE

IN THE ANNALS OF POPULAR PROTEST IN AMERICA, THESE WERE SHINING HOURS IN SEATTLE, ACHIEVED ENTIRELY OUTSIDE THE CONVENTIONAL ARENA OF ORDERLY PROTEST AND WHITE PAPER ACTIVISM AND THE TIMID BLEATS OF THE PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP OF BIG LABOR AND MAINSTREAM GREENS. THIS TRULY WAS AN INSURGENCY FROM BELOW, IN WHICH ALL THOSE WHO STROVE TO MODERATE AND DEFLECT THE TURBULENT FLOOD OF POPULAR OUTRAGE MANAGED TO MAKE FOOLS OF THEMSELVES.

OUR LITTLE SECRETS

- Remembering Rose Bird
- Nazi Compensation

Seattle Diary: It's a Gas, Gas, Gas

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Seattle has always struck us as a suspiciously clean city, manifesting a tidiness that verges on the compulsive. It is the Singapore of the United States: spit-polished, glossy, and eerily beautiful. There is, perhaps, no more scenic setting for a city set next to Elliot Bay on Puget Sound, with the serrated tips of the Olympic mountains on the western skyline and hulking over it all the cool blue hump of Mt. Rainier.

But Seattle is also a city that hides its past in the underground. It is built on layers of engineered muck, like a soggy Ilium. The new opulence brought by Microsoft, Boeing, Starbucks and REI is neatly segregated from the old economic engines, the working docks and the steamy mills of chemical plants of south Seattle and Tacoma. It is a city that is both uptight and laid back, a city of deeply repressed desires and rages. It was the best and the worst of places to convene the WTO, that Star Chamber for global capitalists. In this week Seattle was so tightly wound that it primed to crack.

The city, which practiced drills to prepare itself against possible biological or chemical warfare by WTO opponents, was about to witness its own police department gas its streets and neighborhoods. By the end of the week, much of Seattle's veneer had been scratched off, the WTO talks had collapsed in futility and acrimony and a new multinational popular resistance had blackened the eyes of global capitalism and its shock troops, if only for a few raucous days and nights.

SUNDAY

I arrived in Seattle at dusk and settled into the King's Inn, my ratty hotel on Fifth Avenue two blocks up from the ugly Doric

column of the Westin, the HQ of the US trade delegation and on Tuesday and Wednesday nights the high-rise hovel of Bill Clinton. On the drive up from Portland, I had decided to forego the press briefings, NGO policy sessions and staged debates slated at dozens of venues around Seattle. Instead I determined to pitch my tent with the activists who had vowed in January to shut down Seattle during WTO week. After all, the plan seemed remotely possible. The city with its overburdened streets and constricted geography does half the job itself.

The direct action crowd was assembled at a warehouse on East Denny, up toward Seattle Community College. It was a 20-minute walk and I arrived at midnight to a scene of controlled chaos. The Denny Street warehouse was far more than a meeting place; it was part factory, part barracks, part command and control center. Later on it would become an infirmary.

Inside affinity groups were planning their separate direct actions; others were constructing giant street puppets, bearing the likeness of corporate titans and politicians, such as Charles Hurwitz and Clinton; and another group, led by Earth First!ers from Eugene, were constructing what one referred to as the Trojan Horse, a twenty foot-tall, armored siege tower on wheels, capable of holding 14 people. It was meant to be rolled up near the convention center, allowing the people inside to climb out a hatch in the roof and scale over the Metro buses, which the security forces had parked as barricades near the building. I knew the chief architect of this creation and asked him if he wasn't wasting time and money on such an easy target. "Just wait", he said, a spark of mischief in his eye.

(Seattle continued on page 4)

Our Little Secrets

ROSE BIRD, BRAVE SOUL

Rose Bird died on December 4. Jerry Brown made her California's chief justice in 1977 and after several filthy campaigns against her, Bird and two other liberals justices were turned out by the voters in 1986, largely on the issue of the death penalty. Bird was radical, and hated by business for views such as that there is a fundamental constitutional right to strike. The day we heard of her death at the age of 64 we replayed a tape of a speech she gave to Women Defenders, in San Francisco in 1996. Among her remarks: "I've long held that judges need an education as to how important the jury system is to the judicial process. The jury system is the democratic, legitimating element in the judicial system, its link to the people... How can we live in a two-class society, with our Constitution and our ethos of equality? ...Nothing ticks me off more than seeing that apostle of smugness, William Bennett, talking about responsibility. If you're poor, it's your problem! If you're a little foetus in a woman who came across the border illegally, you don't get any help from us! ... The problem of racism is a problem for whites, it's a problem for us," and then she harshly denounced "the prison industry".

How, on her deathbed, she must have despised Gov. Gray Davis, who is turning

out, on the issue of crime and prisons, to be as bad as Gov. Pete Wilson, perhaps even worse. She entered Boalt law school when the lounges were still segregated between men and women. She was a first in many things, including being the first female public defender in Santa Clara county.

COMPENSATION RACKET

This month brings us some big events on the momentous issue of compensation to Jews for their sufferings during World War Two. The story is by no means as clearcut as one might suppose. In fact it's a thoroughly unwholesome stew of hypocrisy and self aggrandisement. Our authority for this bleak statement is Norman Finkelstein.

Most recently Norman has levelled his sights at Daniel Goldhagen's Hitler's Willing Executioners, demonstrating that the book was stuffed with internal inconsistencies and misuses of the scholarly record in an effort to show that all gentiles are homicidal anti-Semites. Now, both Finkelstein's parents were in the Warsaw ghetto till the end, May, 1943 when the ghetto was emptied out by the Nazis. Norman's father, Harry, spent the last two years of the war as a slave laborer in Auschwitz and survived the Auschwitz death march. His mother, Mary, was in Majdanek concentration camp, and afterwards, two slave labor camps. Until their recent deaths, they lived in Brooklyn. Why, we asked Finkelstein, is he so critical of the current campaigns for compensation?

Finkelstein cites the current negotiations with German private industry to compensate Jewish slave laborers. "I want to emphasize at the outset, I'm speaking here only about the Jewish slave laborers. There is a second issue, the non-Jewish forced laborers who were dragooned to work in Germany (Ukrainians, Poles and so forth) who were never compensated for their suffering. But let me turn to the Jewish slave laborers, among whom were my parents. The matter of compensation is a complicated issue. The first point is that beginning in the early 1950s Germany paid out approximately \$70 billion to Jewish victims of the Nazi holocaust. Most of that money went to German Jews. In addition, some money went to non-German slave laborers. In general, the German compensation for slave laborers was small. If however you could prove an enduring physical injury, they gave a reasonably generous pension for life. Take my father. He had a deep hole in his skull, and so, begin-

ning in the 1950s to the end of his life, he was given by the German government an amount that in the end totalled about \$250,000. My mother, on the other hand, could not prove an enduring physical injury (the German doctors diagnosed her as suffering from hysteria) and she received only \$3,000 as a one-time lump sum."

Finkelstein recounts how the German government already recognized in the early 1950s that settlements of the sort awarded his mother were unfair, and so, between 1953 and 1965 it gave the Jewish Claims Conference, an umbrella of major Jewish organizations, an amount equivalent in today's values, to about \$1 billion. The Jewish organizations, rather than giving it to the victims, used the money for their various pet projects. For example large amounts of money were indirectly channelled to subsidized Jewish communities in the Arab world and other sums were used for what they call holocaust education. There were two exceptions: rabbis and 'outstanding Jewish leaders'. These parties received direct compensation. My parents and indeed most Jews had no idea about this money. For years, my mother kept complaining to the Jewish Claims Conference that she had been inadequately compensated for what she'd gone through in the camps. And Saul Kagan, the head of the claims conference kept asserting that the Germans, not the Conference, set the guidelines. That is entirely untrue. The documentary record unambiguously shows that the German government intended those monies for the former Jewish slave laborers. If people like my mother did not get the money, it was not the Germans' fault."

Here's the present scene, as Finkelstein describes it. "The Jewish Claims Conference is now demanding that private German companies like Daimler-Benz [now merged with Chrysler] must compensate the Jewish slave laborers who never got any money. The Conference pretends to act in the name of what it calls 'needy Holocaust survivors'. But if these former Jewish slave laborers are needy, it's because the Claims Conference kept for other purposes the money Germany originally earmarked for them.

"We have to raise another question, and this question is posed out of respect for the unimaginable suffering endured by those who passed through the concentration camps. Who in God's name are all these Holocaust survivors that the Jewish Claims Conference purports to speak for? One of the best Holocaust scholars and himself a former inmate of Auschwitz, Henry Friedlander, estimates that in May, 1945, there were approximately 100,000 survivors of the concentration camps still alive. This

Editors
ALEXANDER COCKBURN
JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Co-writers
ANDREW COCKBURN

Design
DEBORAH THOMAS

Counselor
BEN SONNENBERG

Published twice monthly except
August, 22 issues a year:
\$40 individuals,
\$100 institutions,
\$30 student/low-income
CounterPunch.
All rights reserved.
CounterPunch
3220 N. St., NW, PMB 346
Washington, DC, 20007-2829
1-800-840-3683 (phone)
1-800-967-3620 (fax)
www.counterpunch.org

estimate, incidentally, appears in a US Holocaust memorial publicatio. The average age of a Holocaust survivor in 1945 was about 26 or 27, which would make them 80 now. At most, at an outside estimate, a quarter—25,000—are still alive. To take the example of my parents. They're both dead, and all their friends, who they met in the DP [displaced persons'] camps after the war are dead too. When I had a commemoration for my mother last year, there were no adult friends of hers still alive for me to invite. They'd all gone, just like my mother and father who died at the ages of 74 and 75. Yet, the Jewish Claims Conference asserts that there are still 135,000 former Jewish slave laborers alive, and when it serves their purpose they throw around figures like a million needy Holocaust survivors still with us. These fabrications are used by the Jewish Claims Conference and its new sister organization, the World Jewish Restitution Organization to shake down nearly every country in Europe, starting with the Swiss in 1996, when they concocted claims that there were between \$7 billion and \$20 billion still lying untouched in dormant Jewish accounts with the ruthless Swiss bankers concealing them from the true heirs. The bankers may be ruthless by disposition but in this case there's simply no evidence to support such claims."

In 1995 the Swiss bankers admitted to the existence of \$32 million in dormant accounts. Since then a Commission headed by the former Federal Reserve head, Paul Volcker, has been searching the accounts of all the Swiss banks. This vast audit has cost between \$200 million and \$500 million, depending whether you believe Volcker or the Swiss bankers. The report was released on December 6. Although it seems that the Swiss banks underestimated the sums in dormant Swiss accounts, the numbers thrown around by the World Jewish Congress appear to have no basis. Nonetheless, Finkelstein says, "the World Jewish Restitution Organization managed to get from the Swiss first \$200 million, and then from Swiss banks, UBS and Credit Suisse, another \$1.25 billion. Now, keep in mind that this was of course all for the sake of 'needy Holocaust survivors', except—naturally—for the lawyers' fees. For example, one lawyer presented a bill asking for several million dollars and one of his itemizations was \$3,000 for reading Tom Bower's book *Nazi Gold*. I will concede it was a wretched book, and no doubt painful to read. But should this lawyer be compensated as much as my mother who passed six years of her life under the Nazis? All the same, I don't want there to be any misunderstanding. The lawyers in this

"Should this lawyer be compensated as much as my mother who passed six years of her life under the Nazis?"

case are an easy target because, just as one would expect, they are an unwholesome bunch, but worse still are the various Jewish organizations always piously claiming to be acting in the name of nearly non-existent 'needy Holocaust survivors'. These days, according to Finkelstein, D'Amato mediates Holocaust lawsuits against German and Austrian banks at \$350 an hour plus expenses. Lawrence Eagleburger, secretary of state under George Bush, earns a salary of \$300,000 as chair of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims. Kagan, long-time director of the Claims Conference, pulls in a relatively modest \$105,000 per annum. He doubtless faced a mountain of legal bills after finally overturning a conviction on 33 counts of misapplying funds and credit while heading a New York bank.

The Swiss are merely the first. "It's not without interest", says Norman, "how the shake-down worked. Switzerland was vulnerable, known for its prosperity and fat bankers. Edgar Bronfman of the World Jewish Congress teamed up with Alfonse D'Amato, then head of the Senate banking committee, and with the media ready to believe any Holocaust story however preposterous. They launched a campaign full of distortions in order to bring the Swiss bankers to their knees. Although the Swiss banks were shaken they were not yet ready to concede the huge sums being demanded.

"So the World Jewish Congress and D'Amato then worked through various state legislatures and local governments to threaten the Swiss bankers with boycotts and withholding of investment. At this point the Swiss had no choice but to throw in the towel. Other eastern European countries, some of them like Poland and the Ukraine in desperate financial straits, now face the same tactics. The World Jewish Restitution Organization now claims that 'World Jewry is the correct heir to the full pre-war assets of Jewish communities that had numbered in the millions. In other words, after filling their pockets with the money intended for the survivors, now they want to fill their pockets with the money of the six million dead Jews.'"

PENTAGON FIT

We are pleased to report that the Ballistic Missile Defense Office, Pentagon nerve center for the Star Wars fraud, has been

forced to respond to our analysis of the means by which the October 2 National Missile Defense test was fixed. Quoting an internal Pentagon analysis, we pointed out that the Target Vehicle was broadcasting its position in a variety of ways, enabling the testers to steer their Kill Vehicle "into the basket" (i.e., in close proximity to the target), rendering it easy for the KV to make its "kill".

Deploying classic disinformation tactics, BMDO flack Lt Col. Rick Lehner asserts that "nothing was 'fixed'" and denies that the target was communicating with the KV (never claimed by CounterPunch) Lehner is careful to ignore our revelation that the decoy balloon released in conjunction with the target was actually an aid to the interceptor, or the other artful stratagems employed by BMDO to make the test a success. Still, we are pleased that BMDO now understands that it is operating under the relentless scrutiny of CounterPunch.

To dally for a moment in the defense sector, we have news about Washington's venerable Center for Defense Information. Through wars hot and cold the CDI has performed useful tasks in correcting Pentagon lies and persiflage. Last year however, former Senator Dale Bumpers, friend of Bill, took over the helm. Would Bumpers eschew old loyalties and lay into the war machine with dash and brio? Seasoned observers had their doubts, which have been amply vindicated. Bumpers had scarcely taken the helm before he was prompting the CDI to endorse NATO's bombing of the Serbs.

Most recently CDI held a fund raiser in New York and invited as the guest of honor none other than the lunatic of the Balkans, General Wesley Clark himself. Clark was given a disgracefully respectful hearing.

There may be worse in store for the CDI. Four years ago, retired Admiral Gene LaRocque, longtime chief of the center, was at last sent out to pasture, much to the relief of the staff.

Now however Bumpers is nearing the end of the statutory one year period in which former Senators must refrain from cashing in as lobbyists, and it is thought he is eager to quit the non-profit arena. LaRocque has let it be known that he intends to return to active service at the CDI. "It will be King Lear in spades," one staffer grimly repines. CP

(Seattle continued from page 1)

MONDAY

And the revolution will be started by....sea turtles. At noon about 2,000 people massed at the United Methodist Church, the HQ of the grassroots NGOs, for a march to the convention center. It was environment day and the Earth Island Institute had prepared more than 500 sea turtle costumes for marchers to wear. The sea turtle became the prime symbol of the WTO's threats to environmental laws, when the WTO tribunal ruled that the US Endangered Species Act, which requires shrimp to be caught with turtle excluder devices, was an unfair trade barrier.

But the environmentalists weren't the only ones on the street Monday morning. In the first showing of a new solidarity, labor union members from the Steelworkers and the Longshoremen showed up to join the march. In fact, Steelworker Don Kegley, led the march, along side environmentalist Ben White. White was later clubbed in the back

I was stunned, staring at the scene with the glazed look of the freshly lobotomized. Then my eyes began to boil and my lips burn.

of the head by a young man who was apparently angry that he couldn't complete his Christmas shopping.

I walked next to Brad Spann, a burly Longshoreman from Tacoma, who held up one of my favorite signs of the entire week: "Teamsters and Turtles...Together At Last!" Brad winked at me and said, "What the hell do you think old Hoffa thinks of that?"

The march, too fast and courteous for my taste, was escorted by motorcycle police and ended essentially in a cage, a fenced-in area next to a construction site near the convention center. A small stage had been erected there hours earlier and Carl Pope, the director of the Sierra Club, was called forth to give the opening speech. Pope is a tiny man squeaky voice, who affects the look and hair-flipping mannerisms of RFK circa 1968. Nearing 90, Dave Brower still has the look of a mountain climber, Pope looks as though the only climbing he does is on a StairMaster. He delivered his speech with a smugness that most of the labor people must have heard as confirmation of their worst fears about the true nature of environmentalists in suits.

Standing near the stage I saw Brent Blackwelder, head of Friends of the Earth.

Behind his glasses and somewhat shambling manner, Blackwelder looks ever so professorial. He's by far the smartest of the environmental CEOs, also the most radical politically, the most willing to challenge the complacency of his fellow green executives. He was slated to give the next talk and I asked him what he thought of following Pope, a Gore promoter, whose staffers had just plunged a few knives in Blackwelder's back following Friends of the Earth's endorsement of Bill Bradley over Al Gore. He shrugged. "We did our damage". "Our endorsement of Bradley stung the Sierra Club almost as much as it did Gore." But Blackwelder isn't under any illusions about Bradley, either. "Bradley's a free trader. We pleaded with him to at least make a strong statement in opposition to the US position on the timber tariff issue. But he wouldn't budge. There was a real opportunity for him to stick it to Gore and prove himself as the better green."

After the speechifying most of the marchers headed back to the church. But a

contingent of about 200 ended up in front of McDonald's where a group of French farmers had mustered to denounce US policy on biotech foods. Their leader was Jose Bove, a sheep farmer from Millau in southwest France and a leader of Confederation Paysanne, a French environmental group. In August, Bove had been jailed in France for leading a raid on a McDonald's restaurant under construction in Larzac. At the time, Bove was awaiting trial on charges that he destroyed a cache of Novartis' genetically-engineered corn. Bove said his raid on the Larzac McDonald's was in response to the US's decision to impose a heavy tariff on Roquefort cheese in retaliation for the European Union's refusal to import American hormone-treated beef. Bove's act of defiance earned him the praise of Jacques Chirac and Friends of the Earth. Bove said he was prepared to start a militant worldwide campaign against "Frankenstein" foods.

Bove showed up at the Seattle McDonald's with rounds of Roquefort cheese, which he handed out to the crowd. After a rousing speech against the evils of Monsanto, and its bovine growth hormone and Round-Up Ready soybeans, the crowd stormed the McDonald's, breaking its windows and urging the customers and workers

to join the marchers on the streets. The first shot in the battle for Seattle. Moments later the block was surrounded by Seattle police in full riot gear. Many of them arrived on armored personal carriers, a black military truck referred to affectionately by the TV anchors on the nightly news as "the Peacekeeper". But this time cops held their distance, merely making sure that no one had been injured. They cordoned off the block until the crowd dispersed on its own in about an hour. At this point, there was still lightness in the air. A big Samoan cop cracked a smile as a protester waved a hunk of stinky cheese in front of his face.

TUESDAY

Less than 12 hours later, Seattle was under civic emergency, a step away from martial law. National Guard helicopters hovered over downtown, sweeping the city with searchlights. A 7 PM curfew had been imposed and was being flouted by thousands—those same thousands who captured the streets, sustained clouds of tears gas, volleys of rubber bullets, concussion grenades, high powered bean cannons and straightforward beatings with riot batons. The bravery of the street warriors had its tremendous triumph: they held the streets long enough to force the WTO to cancel their opening day. This had been the stated objective of the direct action strategists, and they attained it.

At dawn of Tuesday the predicted scenario was somewhat different. There was to be the great march of organized labor, led by the panjandrum of the AFL-CIO, with James Hoffa Jr. in a starring role. Labor's legions—a predicted 50,000—were to march from the Space Needle to the Convention Center and peacefully prevent the WTO delegates from assembling.

It never happened. Instead the labor chiefs talked tough but accepted a cheap deal. They would get a Wednesday meeting with Bill Clinton, with the promise that at future such WTO conclaves they would get "a seat at the table". So instead of joining the throngs bent on shutting down the opening of the WTO, the big labor rally took place at noon around the Space Needle, some fifteen to twenty blocks from the convention center where the protesters on the front lines were taking their stand. When the labor march finally got it under way around 1 PM, its marshals directed most of the marchers away from the battle zones down by the convention center.

For the direct action folks, the morning began in the pre-dawn hours, in a steady rain. More than 2,000 people assembled in Victor Steinbrueck Park, on the waterfront north

of Pike's Place market. Once again, steelworkers and Earth First!ers led the way, carrying a banner with the image of a redwood tree and a spotted owl. The march featured giant puppets, hundreds of signs, the ubiquitous sea turtles, singing, chanting and an ominous drumming. It was an itinerant theater, complete with freak shows and fire breathers, a free-form Mardi Gras of protest.

As the sky finally lightened, I found myself next to a group of black men and women trailing a white van. They turned out to be one of the more creative groups in the march, a collection of hip-hop artists from across the country. The van, dubbed the Rap Wagon, carried a powerful sound system capable of rocking the streets. The rappers were led by Chuckie E from New York, who improvised a rap called "TKO the WTO." Walking with me up Pine Street to the Roosevelt Hotel was an 18-year old from South Central LA named Thomas. I asked him why he was here. "I like turtles and I hate that fucker Bill Gates," he said. Thomas and I held hands, forming a human chain at the intersection of 7th and Pine, intent on keeping the WTO delegates from reaching their meetings.

By now another five or six cans of tear gas had been thrown into the crowd and the intersection was clogged with fumes. At first I was stunned, staring at the scene with the glazed look of the freshly lobotomized. Then my eyes began to boil in my head, my lips burned and it seemed impossible to draw a breath. When it's raining, the chemical agents hug close to the ground, taking longer to dissolve into the air. This compounds the tear gas' stinging power, its immobilizing effect. I staggered back up 6th Avenue toward University, where I stumbled into a cop decked out in his Star Wars storm trooper gear. He turned and gave me a swift whack to my side with his riot club. I fell to my knees and covered my head, fearing a tumult of blows. But the blows never came and soon I felt a gentle hand on my shoulder and a woman's voice say, "Come here".

I retreated into a narrow alley and saw the blurry outline of a young woman wearing a Stetson cowboy hat and a gas mask. "Lean your head back, so that I can wash the chemicals out of your eyes", she said. The water was cool and within seconds I could see again. "Who are you?" I asked. "Osprey", she said and disappeared into the chemical mist. Osprey...the familiar, totemic name of an Earth First!er. Thank god for Edward Abbey, I said to myself.

But the battle going on at 6th and University was far from over. The police moved

in on a group of protesters from Humboldt County who had locked themselves down, and thus immobilized themselves in the middle of the intersection. They were ordered to evacuate the area, which of course they couldn't and wouldn't do. Suddenly, the cops attacked ferociously, dousing them in the face with spurts of pepper spray and then dropping tear gas canisters almost on top of them. Then the valiant police fell upon the helpless protesters with their batons. Two of the dozen or so protesters were knocked unconscious, but the group held its ground and by 2 PM the cops had backed off. The University intersection had been held.

Who were these direct action warriors on the front lines? Earth First!, the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment (the new enviro-steelworker alliance), the Ruckus Society (a direct action training center), Food Not Bombs, Global Exchange and a small contingent of anarchists, dressed in black, with black masks, plus a hefty international contingent including French farmers, Korean greens, Canadian wheat growers and British campaigners

"I've seen things today I never thought I'd see in America", said Steelworker John Goodman.

against genetically modified foods. A group of Britons cornered two Monsanto lobbyists behind an abandoned truck carrying an ad for the Financial Times at the very moment of police onslaught, and at last glimpse the Monsanto men were covering their eyes with their neckties and fleeing back to their hotels.

As the day ticked away the street protesters kept asking, "Where are the labor marchers", expecting that at any moment thousands of longshoremen and teamsters would reinforce them in the fray. The absent masses never came. The marshals' for the union march steered the big crowds away from the action and the isolation of the street protesters allowed the cops to get far more violent. Eventually, several phalanxes of union marchers skirted their herders and headed up 4th Avenue to the battlegrounds at Pine and Pike. Most of them seemed to be from the more militant unions, the Steelworkers, IBEW and the Longshoremen. And they seemed to be pissed at the political penury of their leaders. Randal McCarthy, a Longshoreman from Kelso, Washington, told me: "That fucker, Sweeney. No wonder we keep getting rolled. If he were any dumber, he'd be in management."

By darkness on Tuesday the 2,000 or so

street warriors had won the day, even though they were finally forced to retreat north and east out of the center. Suppose 30,000 union people had reinforced them? Downtown could have been held all night, and the convention center sealed off. Maybe even President Bill would have been forced to stay away. What about that siege tower? Well, it turned out to be an excellent diversionary tactic. When the Seattle police's SWAT teams converged to disable the Earth First!ers' strange contraption, it gave the direct action groups time to secure their positions, successfully encircling the convention center, the nearby hotels and WTO venues. In an odd way it may have been a key to the great victory of the day.

WEDNESDAY

Wednesday was the turning point of the week. After the crackdown of Tuesday night, where even Christmas carolers in a residential area were gassed, many of us wondered who would show up to confront the WTO, Bill Clinton, the police and the national

guard the next morning. More than a thousand, it turned out. And the numbers grew as the day wore on. The resistance had proved its resilience.

The morning's first march headed along Denny street from Seattle Community College toward downtown. The 250 marchers were met at about 7 am by a line of cops in riot gear at 8th avenue. A sobering sign that things had become more serious was the sight of cops armed with AR-15 assault rifles. Some brave soul went up to one of the deputies and asked, "Do those shoot rubber bullets?" "Nope," the cop replied through a Darth Vader-like microphone embedded in his gas mask. "This is the real thing." Dozen of protesters were arrested immediately, placed in plastic wrist cuffs and left sitting on the street for hours—more than were arrested all day on Tuesday.

All praise to the National Lawyer's Guild, which sent dozens of legal observers to Seattle to record incidents of police brutality and advise demonstrators on how to act after being arrested. On Denny that morning I met Marge Buckley, a lawyer from Los Angeles. She was wearing a white t-shirt with "NLG Legal Observer" printed across the front and was furiously writing notes on a pad. Buckley said she had filled several

notepads on Tuesday with tales of unwarranted shootings, gassings and beatings.

The police had begun targeting the "command-and-control" structure of the demonstrators—people with cellphones, bullhorns, the known faces and suspected organizers, medics and legal observers. Several of the plainclothes cops at the Denny Street encounter had photos in their hands and were scanning them to identify the lead organizers. As the marchers occupied the intersection singing "We Shall Overcome", about 20 police formed into a wedge and quickly attacked the protesters, seized a bald-headed man talking on a cellphone (it seemed nearly everyone in Seattle had a cellphone and a camera) and dragged him back to the police line. The man was John Sellers, director of the Ruckus Society.

These targeted arrests may have been meant to turn the protests into the chaotic mess the city's pr people were characterizing it as to the media. But it didn't happen. The various groups of protestors, sometimes in the hundreds, huddled together and de-

capitulating on a key issue: the EU, which had banned import of genetically engineered crops and hormone-treated beef, had agreed to a US proposal to establish a scientific committee to evaluate the health and environmental risks of biotech foods, a sure first step toward undermining the moratorium. Still Vernet was in a jolly mood, lively and invigorated, if a little bemused by the decorous nature of the crowd. Somehow Etienne and I made it through four police barricades all the way across town to the International Media Center, a briefing area hosted by Public Citizen in the Seattle Center, a cramped Greek Revival-style structure. I was there to interview my old friend, Dave Brower and Steelworker David Foster. The Daves were late and to pass time I sat down in front of a TV. There was Bill Clinton speaking at the Port of Seattle. His verbal sleight-of-hand routine was masterful. He denounced Tuesday's violence, but said the WTO delegates should listen to the "legitimate" protesters. He said he disagreed with most of their views, but said that they should at least be

able force to clear the streets. There is now no question but that the most violent attacks by the police and the National Guard came at the request of the White House and not the mayor or the police chief. And, in fact, CNN has reported that Clinton has once again flouted the Posse Comitatus Act by sending in a contingent from the US military to the scene. More than 160 members of the Domestic Military Support Force were sent to Seattle on Tuesday, including troops from the Special Forces division.

Eventually, Clinton shut up and Brower and Foster walked into the room. Brower was breaking new ground once again by pulling together a new group of trade unionists and greens. At 87 years old, Brower, the arch druid, is finally beginning to show his age. He walks with a cane. A pacemaker regulates his heartbeat. He is fighting bladder cancer. And he can't drink as many dry martinis as he used to. But his mind is still as agile as an antelope, his intellectual vision startlingly clear and radical. "Today, the police in Seattle have proved they are the handmaidens of the corporations," said Brower. "But something else has been proved. And that's that people are starting to stand up and say: we won't be transnational victims."

Brower was joined by David Foster, director for District 11 of the United Steelworkers of America, one of the most articulate and unflinching labor leaders in America. Earlier this year, Brower and Foster formed an unlikely alliance, a coalition of radical environmentalists and Steelworkers called the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, which had just run an amusing ad in the New York Times asking "Have You Heard the One About the Environmentalist and the Steelworker". The groups had found they had a common enemy: Charles Hurwitz, the corporate raider. Hurwitz owns the Pacific Lumber Company, the northern California timber firm that is slaughtering some of the last stands of ancient redwoods on the planet. At the same time, he also controls Kaiser Aluminum and has locked out 3,000 Steelworkers at Kaiser's factories in Washington, Ohio and Louisiana "The companies that attack the environment most mercilessly are often also the ones that are the most anti-union," Foster told me. "More unites us than divides us."

I came away thinking that for all its promise this tenuous marriage might end badly. Brower, the master of ceremonies, isn't going to be around forever to heal the wounds and cover up the divisions. There are deep, inescapable issues that will, inevitably, pit Steelworkers, fighting for their jobs in an

"Do these guns shoot rubber bullets?" "Nope," said the cop through the microphone in his gas mask. "This is the real thing."

cided their next course of action by a rudimentary form of consensus. Everyone was given a chance to have a say and then a vote was taken on what to do next and, usually, the will of the majority was followed without significant disruptions. The problem was that it slowed down the marches, allowing the police and National Guard troops to box in the protesters, most tragically later Wednesday evening at Pike's Place Market.

As the march turned up toward the Sheraton and was beaten back by cops on horses, I teamed up with Étienne Vernet and Ronnie Cummings. Cummings is the head of one of the feistiest groups in the US, the PureFood Campaign, Monsanto's chief pain in the ass. Cummings hails from the oil town of Port Arthur, Texas. He went to Cambridge with that other great foe of industrial agriculture, Prince Charles. Cummings was a civil rights organizer in Houston during the mid-sixties. "The energy here is incredible. Black and white, labor and green, Americans, Europeans, Africans and Asians arm-in-arm. It's the most hopeful I've felt since the height of the civil rights movement."

Vernet lives in Paris, where he is a leading organizer for the radical green group EcoRopa. At that very moment the European Union delegates inside the convention were

permitted to observe the proceedings. Later that day Clinton met with the complaisant green leaders, including National Wildlife's Mark van Puten, the Sierra Club's Carl Pope and World Resources Institute chairman William Ruckelshaus. Ruckelshaus is also a longtime board member of Weyerhaeuser, the Seattle-based transnational timber company. On Thursday, environmentalists held a large demonstration outside the downtown offices of the timber company's realty wing.

Clinton talked about having the WTO incorporate environmental sidebars into its rulemaking. But the administration didn't back away from its Global Logging Amendment, an accelerated reduction in tariffs on the global timber trade. George Frampton, head of the Council on Environmental Quality and former head of the Wilderness Society, appeared at a press conference later in the day and stiff-armed the greens. "Knowledgeable environmentalists shouldn't have anything against the measure", he said

Clinton called the events outside his suite in the Westin "a rather interesting hoopla". The president expressed sympathy for the views of those in the streets at the very moment his aids were ordering Seattle Mayor Paul Schell (who people took to calling "Mayor Shellshocked") to use all avail-

ever-tightening economy, against greens, defending dwindling species like sockeye salmon that are being killed off by the hydrodams that power the aluminum plants. When asked about this potential conflict both Brower and Foster danced around it skillfully. But it was a dance of denial. The tensions won't go away simply because the parties agree not to mention them in public. Indeed, they might even build, like a pressure cooker left unwatched.

But if anything could weld the alliance together it was the actions of the Seattle cops and National Guard, who, until Wednesday afternoon had displayed a reluctance to crack down on unionists. The Steelworkers had gotten permission from the mayor for a sanctioned march from the Labor Temple to the docks, where they performed a mock "Seattle Steel Party", dumping styrofoam steel girders into the waters of Elliot Bay, then, showing their new-found green conscience, they fished back out almost immediately).

When the rally broke up, hundreds of Steelworkers joined with other protesters in an impromptu march down 1st Avenue. As the crowd reached Pike Place Market, they found paramilitary riot squads waiting for them and were rocked with volleys of military-strength CS gas, flash bombs, and larger rubber bullets, about a half-inch in diameter. The onslaught was indiscriminate. Holiday shoppers and Metro buses were gassed. In an effort to jack up the intimidation, the cop squads were marching in almost goose-stepping fashion, smacking their riot clubs against their shin-guards to create a sinister sound with echoes back to Munich. This was the most violent of the street battles that I witnessed, involving hundreds of police and more than 20 tear gas attacks.

There is a certain species of pacifist (often out of the Quaker tradition) who finds any outward expression of outrage embarrassing. Thus it was that demonstrators at nearly every corner and barricade were being cautioned "not to retaliate" against police attacks. They were even warned not to throw the tear gas cans back toward the police lines. But, of course, that was the safest place for them. They weren't going to hurt the cops, who were decked out in the latest chemical warfare gear.

That night at Pike Place Market a can of

The vandals weren't "mindless". They destroyed Starbucks, but didn't bother the independent coffee shop.

tear gas landed at my feet. Next to me were a young woman and her four-year-old son. As the woman pulled her child inside her raincoat to protect him from the poison gas, I reached down, grabbed the canister and heaved it back toward the advancing black wall of cops. The can was so hot it seared by hand. Expecting to be shot at, I dove behind the nearest dumpster and saw a familiar face. It was Thomas, one of the rappers I'd walked with on Tuesday morning. We huddled close together, shielding our eyes from the smoke and gas. "Now all these muthafuckas up here have a taste of what it's like in Compton nearly every night," Thomas screamed.

Later that night, in the Capital Hill residential district, a Seattle cop accosted a man on the sidewalk, poked him in the chest with his baton, kicked him in the groin and then, for good measure, shot him in the neck with a rubber bullet. The man wasn't a WTO protester, but a resident who had been gassed out of his home. The image, which was caught on television cameras, helped to turn the tide against the police and, by extension, the WTO itself.

Seattle police said they responded aggressively only when their officers were hit with rocks and bottles. Nonsense. There's no rocky rubble on the streets of the Emerald City. In fact, there weren't any glass bottles, either. In the eight or nine confrontations I witnessed, the most the cops were hit with were some half-full plastic water bottles and a few lightweight sticks that had been used to hold cardboard signs.

In the end, what was vandalized? Mainly the boutiques of Sweatshop Row: Nordstrom's, Adidas, the Gap, Bank of America, Niketown, Old Navy, Banana Republic and Starbucks. The expressions of destructive outrage weren't anarchic, but extremely well-targeted. The manager of Starbucks whined about how "mindless vandals" destroyed his window and tossed bags of French Roast onto the street. But the van-

dals weren't mindless. They didn't bother the independent streetside coffee shop across the way. Instead, they lined up and bought cup after cup. No good riot in Seattle could proceed without a cup of espresso.

These minor acts of retribution served as a kind of Gulf of Tonkin incident. They were used to justify the violent onslaughts by the police and the National Guard. Predictably, the leaders of the NGO's were fast to condemn the protesters. The World Trade Observer is a daily tabloid produced during the convention by the mainstream environmental groups and the Nader shop. Its Wednesday morning edition contained a stern denunciation of the direct action protests that had shut down the WTO the day before. Pope repudiated the violence of the protests, saying it delegitimized the position of the NGOs. He did not see fit to criticize the actions of the police.

But even Carl Pope was outdone by Medea Benjamin, the head of Global Exchange, who sent her troops out to protect the facades of Niketown and the Gap from being defaced by protesters. Benjamin told the New York Times: "Here we are protecting Nike, McDonald's, The Gap, and all the while I'm thinking, 'Where are the police?'"

SUBSCRIPTION INFO

Enter/Renew Subscription here:

One year individual, \$40

One year institution, \$100

One year student/low income, \$30

Please send back issue(s)

_____ (\$5/issue)

And why not make CounterPunch a Christmas gift for your friends? Call us with your credit card at 1-800-840-3683

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Payment must accompany order, or just dial 1-800-840-3683 and renew by credit card. Add \$10 for foreign subscriptions. If you want CounterPunch emailed to you please supply your email address. Make checks payable to: **CounterPunch.**
Business Office
PO Box 228, Petrolia, CA 95558

The most violent police attacks came at the request of the White House and not the mayor of Seattle.

These anarchists should have been arrested.' "Of course, Nike is used to police intervening to protect its factories from worker actions in places like Indonesia and Vietnam. It was depressing to hear Benjamin calling for such crackdowns in Seattle.

The assault on Niketown didn't begin with the anarchists, but with protesters who wanted to get a better view of the action. They got the idea from Rainforest Action Network activists who had free-climbed the side of a building across the street and un-

For one brief moment, the city of Seattle had been rid of an architectural blight. As Harper's magazine reported a few years ago the black-and-silver neo-noir stylings of Niketown outlets are wilful souvenirs of designs concocted by Albert Speer for the Third Reich.

THURSDAY AND BEYOND

By Thursday morning I was coughing up small amounts of blood, 600 demonstra-

gala; turned the corporate press from prim denunciations of "mindless anarchy" to bitter criticisms of police brutality; forced the WTO to cancel its closing ceremonies and to adjourn in disorder and confusion, without an agenda for the next round.

In the annals of popular protest in America, these were shining hours, achieved entirely outside the conventional arena of orderly protest and white paper activism and the timid bleats of the professional leadership of big labor and environmentalists. This

"Bill Bradley wouldn't budge. There was a real opportunity for him to stick it to Gore and prove himself as the better green candidate in this race", said Brent Blackwelder, head of Friends of the Earth.

furled a huge banner depicting a rattlesnake, coiled and ready to strike, with the slogan, "Don't Trade on Me."

Occupying the intersection in front of Niketown was a group of Korean farmers and greens, several were dressed in their multicolored traditional garb. No secret why they picked this corner. For decades, Nike has exploited Korean workers in its Asian sweatshops. These folks cheered wildly and banged their copper kettles when a climber scaled the façade of Nike's storefront, stripped the chrome letters off the Niketown sign and tossed them to the crowd, as Nike store managers sat in the window a floor above eating their lunch. The action should have warmed the hearts of nearly everyone.

tors were in jail, the police were on the defensive over their tactics and the WTO conference itself was coming apart at the seams. Inside the WTO, the African nations were showing the same solidarity as the protesters on the streets. They refused to buckle to US demands. The African delegates hung together and the talks collapsed.

Beyond the wildest hopes of the street warriors, five days in Seattle brought us one victory after another. The protesters initially shunned and denounced by the respectable "inside strategists", scorned by the press, gassed and bloodied by the cops and National Guard shut down the opening ceremony; prevented Clinton from addressing the WTO delegates at a Wednesday night

truly was an insurgency from below in which all those who strove to moderate and deflect the turbulent flood of popular outrage managed to humiliate themselves. Over the week, the Dow shot up more than 500 points.

I walked out to the street one last time. The sweet stench of CS gas still flavored the morning air. As I turned to get into my car for the journey back to Portland, a black teenager grabbed my arm. Smiling, he said, "Hey, man, does this WTO thing come to town every year?" I knew immediately how the kid felt. Along with the poison, the flash bombs and the rubber bullets, there was an optimism and energy and camaraderie on the streets of Seattle that I hadn't felt in a long, long time. CP

CounterPunch

3220 N Street, NW, PMB 346
Washington, DC 20007-2829

Attention Subscribers: the number that appears above your name on the mailing label refers to the ISSUE NUMBER of CounterPunch after which your subscription expires, NOT the month. *Don't worry, this confuses everyone.*

Presorted
First Class Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 269
Skokie, IL

First Class Mail

Eyewitness: Those Shining Days in Seattle